

A Report to the 42nd District

Spring 2002



Kelli Linville

State Representative
42nd District

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Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Thank you for your time today. We need you and other citizens to participate in your Washington State Legislature. I think everyone agrees that, without every citizen's participation, our democracy cannot possibly work.

We recently finished rewriting our state's operating budget and addressing our state's transportation system. My report covers details about these two subjects that I believe can help lift our economy out of this recession. Several other legislative matters are also addressed in these pages.

A theme in every legislative discussion this year reflects at least some portion of our agenda for Washington families. This agenda features three fundamentals:

- **Security.** We should live and work without apprehension about our personal and family well-being.
- **Opportunity.** We should have a fair chance to obtain — and keep — a good-paying job that supports our family.
- **Mobility.** We should be able to get home, get to work, and get to other destinations in a safe and timely manner.

Please don't hesitate to call or write to share your comments — especially if you *don't* agree with me. I need to hear all sides to an issue, and I welcome your views. That's the essence of our system.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelli". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue background.

Kelli Linville
State Representative
42nd Legislative District



Representative Kelli Linville

◆ Rebalanced budget:

On time — and with no increase in any general taxes

Going into this year's legislative session, we faced an operating-budget shortfall of \$1.2 billion — and that chasm grew to about \$1.5 billion halfway through our 60-day meeting. The severe recession, combined with the continuing energy and water crises, called for difficult choices to get the budget back in balance.



Well before the session began, I resolved to oppose any hike in general taxes. With our state in a serious recession, it makes no sense to economically injure people and businesses any further — and thus possibly cause even worse unemployment. I also rejected budget-balancing that might be accomplished by slashing children's programs — or by radically cutting services for other people who cannot fend for themselves. It isn't right to ask people already hurting to hurt some more.

When all was said and done, we got the budget back in reasonable balance without hiking general taxes, without imposing knockout cuts — and without going overtime.

The revised budget for the State of Washington fully funds basic education, maintains the voter-approved initiatives regarding teacher-pay and class-size, and includes funding for medical interpreters for Medicaid doctors. Interested commercial fishers can look into the license-buyback program, thanks to another part of the budget. Finally, this new budget helps fund the parent-trust program at the Brigid Collins facility in Bellingham — where the mission is to prevent child-abuse.

But something had to give. Just like many Washington citizens, we had to make extremely difficult choices about what we cannot afford to do right now.

The new budget passed in mid-March slices more than \$684 million from the two-year plan approved last year. Reductions were made in programs such as Supplemental Security Income, Family Reconciliation Services, and therapeutic child-care development. Also, the new budget has a smaller increase than first proposed for social-service providers, it closes wards at Western State and Eastern State hospitals, and it eliminates the Mission Creek Youth Camp.

We need to scrub the state budget. That's all there is to it.

I have emphasized with our House leadership that we should thoroughly examine — line-by-line — the budget. Before the 2003 Legislature starts next January, I want us to be much better prepared to deal with any budget deficit. My objective is to get that budget back in total balance before we bump against a legislative deadline.

Capital budget reflects an emphasis on quality jobs

Now more than ever, high-quality economic development is important to stimulate the growth and retention of high-quality jobs. The stimulus package in the capital budget is a very good example.

We need these projects to foster the kind of business climate that grows family-wage jobs. The legislation includes statewide funding for local jails, salmon-recovery, and water-pollution control. Specific northwestern Washington projects highlight:

- Job-creation and infrastructure projects at Western Washington University.
- Heating and other system-repairs at Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Technical College.
- Building work at the state park at Birch Bay.

◆ Water, water:

Securing a safe, healthy supply of an essential resource

This year, another step toward genuine water-reform was taken in my bipartisan measure bolstering our watersheds. My search, as always, is for achievable strategies that sustain a safe and healthy supply for every community — and for every need.

Twenty-five percent of Washington's 62 watersheds right now are unable to provide enough water for their numerous uses. I've been working on water-reform for nine years — and I'm not done yet. The policy we passed this session is especially important, however, because it emphasizes proper planning at the local level. This good planning in our communities is fundamental to meet legitimate needs of families, farms and fish.

A Report to the 42nd District

Aimed at shoring up water laws for the 21st century, this new policy declares that:

- Industrial water can be reused for purposes other than human-use and consumption.
- More citizens can participate in the trust-water-rights program of lease, purchase or water-donation.
- General water-permit applications can be combined with applications for water-storage rights
- Education and technical help will be provided for citizens and businesses *before* violation-notices are sent and *before* any penalties are assessed.



A water-rights provision pivotal in the Lynden region

As I noted, the new water policy expands the trust-water-rights program, which is quite important for a community near Lynden. Because their water is contaminated, these citizens have used bottled water for more than 20 years.

Although Lynden is willing to supply water to them, the city has exceeded the limit in its own water right. With the unfortunate reduction in operations at Georgia-Pacific, though, Bellingham has water that could supply the Lynden-area community.

Our new water policy allows a water-right holder to donate part of the right to a trust program without going through the usual bureaucracy. So in this case, Bellingham could donate part of its right to the trust — which leaves water in the middle fork of the Nooksack River for fish. Lynden can then withdraw water for use by folks in the contaminated community.

◆ Agriculture:

Washington farms are Washington's No. 1 industry

Importantly, we were able to protect tax incentives approved last year to assist our agricultural communities.

Another bill I sponsored includes animal waste among customer-options for purchasing an alternative-

energy resource. Electric utilities must tell customers about an option to buy animal-waste-generated-energy resources — in addition to other alternative-energy sources the customers can already buy.

◆ Recycling renewed:

Let's get our state back to meeting these key objectives

We passed another bill I sponsored to refurbish our recycling and waste-reduction efforts. The measure seeks both to encourage recycling of construction waste and to remove yard debris from landfills.

Local waste-management plans will arrange residential-rate structures, including incentives for people to recycle and reduce waste-collection. Solid-waste-collection companies will keep a portion of the extra revenue — as long as they demonstrate that they're increasing recycling. The rest of the money from sale of recyclable materials can go to residential customers.

A company's plan would first go to the Utilities and Transportation Commission. The proposal must also be certified by the appropriate local government as being consistent with the local government's own solid-waste plan. In our northwestern Washington region, the Whatcom County Solid Waste Committee would review a company's plan.

◆ Efficiency:

Every one of us — every citizen — is the government

I have always held that government agencies should be a partner with — not an adversary of — people and businesses. You should always know what to expect when you work with an agency.

I secured support for legislation this session to streamline the government-permit process. The bill establishes a Permit Assistance Office administered by the governor. It is fundamental that we set up this system to coordinate our state's permitting policies — especially for multi-jurisdictional projects. The Permit Assistance Office will provide information, facilitation, and coordination for people and businesses.

Representative Kelli Linville

◆ Transportation:

Accountability is keyed in work to unclog our roads

Our efficiency and accountability plan for transportation was the first important bill passed in the 2002 Legislative Session.

This bill, which was quickly signed by the governor, underscores the need to improve our transportation infrastructure. Genuine efficiency and accountability are highlighted. In the legislation, we adopted important recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation. This panel was comprised of citizens and businesspeople who invested two years searching for ways to move our roads, highways, bridges, ferries, and other parts of the infrastructure into the 21st century.

The bill authorizes more contracting-out for design and construction — a renewed emphasis on building stronger partnerships with private companies.

Specific projects in Whatcom County include:

- Nooksack Road to Cherry Street — all-weather road.
- Laurel to Badger Road — improvements.
- State Route 542/Orleans Road — widening.
- Sunset Drive — improvements.

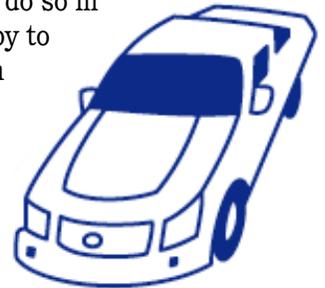
- Interstate 5 in Blaine to Canadian border — additional lanes.

This 10-year, \$7.7 billion statewide transportation proposal is meant to improve highway safety and efficiency. A nine-cent increase in the state gas tax — five cents starting next January and four cents the following year — would produce most of the revenue. A 30-percent increase in the gross vehicle-weight fee — half next January and half the following year — and a one-percent sales-tax increase on vehicles starting next January would produce the rest of the revenue.

You and other Washington citizens will make the final decision on the transportation-funding proposal in this November's election.

I've limited my newsletter to these relatively few lines on the transportation package because our state ethics law bars the use of public resources — such as legislative newsletters — to discuss candidate and ballot issues at too much specific length.

While I'm not permitted to do so in this newsletter, I'd be happy to discuss the issue further in person, on the phone, or in community meetings. The ethics law does allow legislators to answer specific inquiries in those types of forums.



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